

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A drive-through operation system, comprising:
a data-receiving module;
a first data-entry module; and
a second data-entry module, wherein the first data-entry module and the second data-entry module are capable of communicating with the data-receiving module; wherein the data-entry modules are capable of transmitting data indicative of an order for requested items by a respective first or second customer to the data-receiving module, the data-receiving module capable of generating a signal that a respective first or second order is available for pickup and transmitting the signal to the first or second customer to approach a pick-up location.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein the signal is visual.
3. The system of claim 1, wherein the signal is a moveable gate.
4. The system of claim 1, wherein the first data-entry module and the second data-entry module are located along a path coupling the first and second data-entry modules to the pickup location; the first data-entry module located along the path such that a vehicle disposed adjacent to the first data-entry

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module does not impede the path of a second vehicle traveling from the second data-entry module to the pickup location.

5. A drive-through operation system, comprising:
 - a data-receiving module;
 - a first data-entry module capable of transmitting data indicative of an order for requested items by a customer to the data-receiving module; and
 - a signaling device coupled to the data-receiving module to indicate to the customer when to approach a pickup location to pick up the requested items.

6. The system of claim 5, wherein the signaling device is a light.

7. The system of claim 5, wherein the signaling device is a moveable gate.

8. A method of queuing drive-through operations, comprising the steps of:
 - receiving a first order from a first customer;
 - receiving a second order from a second customer;
 - signaling the first customer to approach a pick-up location if the first order is ready for pickup; and
 - signaling the second customer to approach the pick-up location if the second order is ready for pickup.

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9. The method of claim 8, further comprising the step of signaling the first customer to wait in a predefined location until a second signal is sent instructing the first customer to approach the pickup location.

5 10. A method of queuing drive-through operations, comprising the steps of:
receiving a first order from a first customer located at a data-entry module;

receiving a second order from a second customer located at the data-receiving module; and

10 signaling the first customer to wait in a predefined location between the data-entry module and a pickup window if the second order is ready for pickup before the first order is ready.

15 11. The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of signaling the first customer to approach the pick-up location when the first order is ready for pickup.

20 12. A method of queuing drive-through operations, comprising the steps of:
receiving a first order from a first customer located at a first data-entry module;

receiving a second order from a second customer located at a second data-entry module;

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signaling the first customer to wait at the first data-entry module until the first order is ready for pickup at a pickup window; and

signaling the second customer to approach the pickup window.

5 13. The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of signaling the second customer to approach the pickup window before the first customer if the second order is ready for pickup before the first order is ready for pickup.

10 14. A drive-through operation system, comprising:

a pickup window;

a first data-entry module;

a second data-entry module; and

a path coupling the first and the second data-entry modules to the pickup window; the first data-entry module located along the path such that a vehicle disposed adjacent the first data-entry module does not impede the path of a second vehicle traveling from the second data-entry module to the pickup window.

15 15. The drive-through operation system of claim 14, wherein the first and second data-entry modules include a payment acceptance device for accepting payment for items ordered through the respective data-entry module.

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16. The drive-through operation system of claim 14, further comprising a payment acceptance device for accepting payment for items ordered through either the first or the second data-entry module.

17. The drive-through operation system of claim 16, wherein the payment acceptance device is located between the first data-entry module and the pickup window.

18. The drive-through operation system of claim 16, wherein the payment acceptance device accepts one or more of cash and credit cards.

19. A method of queuing drive-through operations, comprising the steps of:
receiving a first order from a first customer;
receiving a second order from a second customer; and
signaling the customer whose order is ready first to approach a pick-up location.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of signaling the customer whose order is ready second to wait in a predefined location.

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